

AYOUTHISSUES

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EMPLOYMENT

The Employment Access Program explained • Two views of the Workshop Program by one of its staff members and by a current participant

The Employment Access Program

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What I propose to do in this article is address four questions:

What is the Employment Access Program?

What does the Program hope to achieve?

What is the Program achieving?

What is the significance of the Program?

What is the Employment Access Program?

The Employment Access Program was established in September 1985; funded by the Department of Labour and based at Community Services Victoria. The aim of the program is to affect long-term improvements in the access of young offenders and institutionalised youth to employment and training opportunities.

Young offenders and institutionalised youth are defined as clients of Community Services Victoria, aged 15-21 years, on a Statutory or Court Order such as Wardship, Youth Training Centre Sentence, Youth Probation, Youth Parole, Youth Attendance Order or Supervision Order. For the purpose of this definition, this includes ex-clients and non-statutory clients who are considered "at risk" of entering the Statutory system.

The rationale for the target group of 15-21 years is that while youth probation, parole and wardship cease at age 18 (in some instances wardship is extended beyond 18 years of age), young people up to the age of 21 years can be sentenced to a Youth Training Centre and can be released on Youth Parole. Those younger than 15 years will generally need a school exemption to participate in the Program.

It is estimated that there are approximately 4000 members of the target group in Victoria.

It should be noted that implementation of the Final Report of the Child Welfare Practice and Legislative Review Committee, Equity and Social Justice for Children, Families and Communities could affect the definition of the target group. Three demonstration projects have been established to provide models of alternative service delivery to satisfy the employment and training needs of the target group and to provide data on these



needs. The projects have been designed to test a variety of different strategies and to identify and challenge barriers which restrict the access of the target group to specific employment and training options:

1. Employment Placement Officer (EPO)

The EPO project aims to test the efficacy of providing employment and training assistance specifically to the target group on a regional and community basis, in order to formulate an appropriate Statewide model. Five EPO's are located in the following regions — Central Highlands, Inner Urban, Western Suburbs, Inner/Outer Eastern and Barwon. The EPO's primary role is to provide vocational counselling, employment and training placement for the target group.

2. Apprenticeship Support Officer (ASO)

The ASO position was created to involve and maintain target group participation in the State Additional Apprenticeship Scheme (SAAS) and to identify the factors which influence their placement and retention. An Apprenticeship Support

Officer (ASO) is employed to increase the participation and retention rate of the target group in the apprenticeship vacancies available with SAAS. The role encompasses direct support work with the target group and an educational role with employers, welfare workers and government organisations.

3. The Workshop, Collingwood Organ Factory.

The project's objectives include testing the access of the target group to the leisure/entertainment industry and appropriate training models. The Workshop is based at the Collingwood Organ Factory — a community based venue for theatre groups. The Workshop provides employment and training for young women from the target group in the design and construction of theatre stage sets, props and other equipment. Employed as stage hands, the young women receive both on and off-the-job training, attend outside work experience and are supervised by a Project Officer.

The ASO liaises closely with the EPO's in pre-placement, placement and post-placement support offered to the target group. The EPO for Inner Urban liaises with the Workshop. (See accompanying article).

A fourth project is under consideration. Harrison House has proposed the establishment of a motorbike repair and maintenance business which would annually involve 16 members of the target group.

The Program has a Coordination Unit based at CSV Central Office — a Program Manager, EPO Coordinator, Project Worker and Typist/Stenographer. The work of the Coordination Unit is supervised by a CSV and Department of Labour Inter-Departmental Committee. The Criminology Department at

Melbourne University has been funded to undertake an evaluation. This will involve (a) identifying successful features of the program and the factors contributing towards that success (b) identifying detracting factors in the program operation and suggesting alternative strategies to overcome these and (c) providing regular feedback to all participants.

Why was the Employment Access Program Established?

As already stated, the overall aim of the program is to improve the access of the target group to long term employment and training options in the labour market. The program's rationale is that young offenders and institutionalised youth have limited access to the labour market. This rationale was enunciated by a Steering Committee which established the program's objectives and parameters in its report, *Program Document for Young Offenders and/or Institutionalised Youth (June 1984)* and the subsequent Funding Proposal to Ministry of Employment and Training (December 1984).

The report argued that young offenders and institutionalised youth were "often poor school achievers due to personal, family or environmental factors. They have negative attitudes towards education and limited job opportunities in a decreasing labour market."

According to the report, youth who are placed in Youth Training Centres are further disadvantaged because "they are excluded from many educational and training programs because of their status and experience."

The report emphasised that "young people can be placed in institutions or other facilities without being offenders and that "These youth have special barriers to overcome because of the separation from their natural family. They often experience personal guilt and anger because intervention was deemed necessary."

The Steering Committee's Funding
Proposal document recognised that the following labour market barriers hindered the employment of young offenders and institutionalised youth — discriminatory practices, lack of jobs, lack of access to career opportunities and lack of commitment within the labour market to inducting and socializing youth into employment.

The report criticised programs available as not adequately meeting the needs of the target group. It was noted, for instance, that on their release from institutions the target group could not apply for CEP positions because they had not been registered as unemployed at the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) for at least three months continuously.

In concluding, the report argued that "As a result of all these factors, young offenders and institutionalised youth are ill-prepared to compete in the labour market, experience high levels and long periods of unemployment."

What has the Program Achieved?

When the program was designed it was envisaged that over a 12 month period, it would provide appropriate models and guidelines for:

1. The establishment/extension of PEP programs, Access, bridging and community based vocational training programs for young people.
2. The youth employment placement/advocacy function.
3. Appropriate financial counselling information and other supports necessary to maintain young people (particularly the target group) in education and training.
4. Appropriate models of pre-apprenticeship training incorporating a work practice component.
5. A training module for welfare/youth workers on employment and training options for young people.
6. Alternative career ladders for young people with a low standard of formal education initially.

In addition, it was envisaged that representation would have been made by the Committee inter alia to:

Community Services Victoria on: de-institutionalisation, registration of eligible wards for employment, education of welfare workers in employment and training matters, case planning issues, financial and other supports necessary to encourage participation in education/training.

Department of Labour on apprenticeship training, SAAS, provision of alternative career structures and placement of employment advocate units for all disadvantaged workers.

Department of Employment and Industrial Relations on labour market programs,

CES management of target group placement/counselling and training of officers.

Technical and Further Education on various alternative training packages.

Education Department on impact of curriculum offered institutionalised schools in Youth Training Centres and the supports necessary in integration of target group into mainstream schools.

While the list is ambitious, the program is progressively attempting to address these issues. Ultimately, time will determine the success of this ambition.

The most concrete achievement has been the placement of the target group in jobs. In a six month period approximately 176 placements have been made:

Employment Placement Officer only	111
Apprenticeship Support Officer only	32
Combination of Employment Placement Officer and Apprenticeship Support Officer	33
	176

At the 20 March 1986 the five EPO's had placed 144 young people in jobs with 102 (71%) still working. These figures do not include casual work, training, further education and other vocational preparation placements. At the 20 March, for instance, an additional 10 of the target group were in casual work — defined as employment of less than four week's duration.

Participation of ex-offenders, probationers, parolees and wards of State in the State Additional Apprenticeship Scheme has previously been low — a total of 20 for the three intakes between 1983 and 1985. For this year's intake, by April 1986 an additional 65 members of the target group had been placed in SAAS positions and 58 were still working.

By way of illustration, the increased participation of the target group in SAAS is a reflection of the appointment of ASO and EPO's. These positions did not exist until September 1985 and were not able, therefore, to impact on the first three years of SAAS.

The Program has also commenced the more complex task of identifying barriers to the employment and training of the target group. Two of these barriers are the Community Employment Program (CEP) and the Formal Training Allowance for Youth (FTAY).

Community Employment Program: The target group does not have adequate access to the Community Employment Program. While in theory eligible for CEP, there are real practical difficulties for the target group. Their eligibility is conditioned by requiring unemployment for at least three months continuously, the absence of a Statewide target for the group, inappropriate labour market availability testing and matching processes and the lack of priority for the target group.

Formal Training Allowance for Youth: The Formal Training Allowance for Youth is available to youth aged 16 years and above to attend approved Participation and Equity Program (PEP) courses and the Community Youth Special Projects (CYSP). It is not available to 15 and 14 year olds with school exemption certificates. Their ineligibility is based on the desire of the Government to encourage youth to remain or return to school. Not all young offenders and institutionalised youth, however, are in a position to return to school and it is more appropriate to provide different educational opportunities through programs such as PEP and CYSP.

Having identified these barriers in these two cases, it has been necessary to:

1. Collect data on these barriers.
2. Identify possible ways to overcome these.
3. Test these possibilities where appropriate.
4. Investigate and make recommendations for long term strategies and policies.
5. Lobby the appropriate bodies on the relevant policy and program issues.

The CEP and the FTAY are illustrative of the barriers experienced by the target group. The list of barriers is extensive. The general barriers include competing with too many for too few jobs, inappropriate eligibility criteria, gender segmentation, lack of access to career opportunities and the level of income support. These barriers are, then, reflected and reinforced in part or whole in various programs and services such as the Community Employment Program, the Formal Training Allowance for Youth, work study positions under the Youth Guarantee, traineeships and TAFE courses.

Since the Review of Labor Market Programs (the Kirby Report), there have been policy and program changes such as the introduction of the Youth Guarantee, traineeships, Job Start and the Formal Training Allowance for Youth. It has already been noted that the new Training Allowance has introduced a new barrier.

While the Program's achievements are real, they need to be placed in a broader context which includes the following considerations:

1. The ability and willingness of a young person to obtain and retain a job is conditioned by the quality of a job.
2. Placing young people in jobs irrespective of the nature of the job and

their preparedness is designed to discourage job retention.

3. The Program is not creating jobs but is assisting young offenders and institutionalised youth to compete more effectively for existing jobs.
4. An exclusive emphasis on job placement for its own sake could devalue appropriate education and training, the critical importance of advocacy support in obtaining and retaining jobs and the causes of unemployment.
5. The disproportionate placement rates for males and females — seven women out of 65 SAAS applicants.
6. It is harder to change inappropriate structures, policies and practices than it is to place the target group.

What is the Significance of the Employment Access Program?

The program was established in September 1985. Comments on the significance of the Program must, of necessity, be preliminary.

Melbourne University's evaluation will be a critical tool in examining the impact of the Program and its attempts to affect a long-term improvement in the employment and training options available to the target group.

The basis of the program's significance lies in its philosophical underpinning. It is a philosophical underpinning originally developed by the Steering Committee which developed the program and has been subsequently reinforced and substantiated by the youth principles, the Social Justice principles, the Youth Guarantee and the Final Report of the Child Welfare Practice and Legislative Review Committee, Equity and Social Justice for Children, Families and Communities. In developing the Program, the Steering Committee identified the following principles to guide the Program's development:

Programs should aim to enhance the long term employment prospects of young people.

Programs should demonstrate an understanding of education and training requirements of young people.

Where possible, young people should be provided with certificates which document their participation in the program.

Programs must be based on a realistic assessment of current and future labour market trends.

Programs must provide a range of options for young people and must be flexible enough to meet the individual's particular needs.

All youth participating in the program will have decision making powers, concerning their involvement in the program, its design, implementation, management and evaluation.

Programs should be designed to maximise the paid involvement of young people by way of appropriate benefits/training allowances/award wages and be prepared to provide the support necessary to facilitate the young person's involvement in any aspect of the program.

Programs should seek to maximise the use of local resources and networks.

"Programs should encourage young people to participate in existing community services as much as possible rather than establish special programs for them.

It is desirable that programs develop adequate linkages to appropriate community services and other education and employment services."

Therefore, a significant part of the program should be operated in the community.

Programs should be designed to demonstrate innovative and effective ways of meeting labour market needs of youth and indicate whether the models can be replicated elsewhere.

An important consequence of this philosophical underpinning is the attempt to work in with existing mainstream services in assisting the target group integrate into mainstream employment, training and education.

It would be useful to briefly examine the youth principles, the Social Justice principles, the Youth Guarantee and the report Equity and Social Justice for Children, Families and Communities and how these might relate to the Employment Access Program.

The Youth Principles

Five principles were enshrined in legislation with the establishment of the Youth Policy Development Council. These principles are incorporated in the Youth Affairs Bill. Three of these principles are:

1. To encourage the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities between young people of different background and gender.
2. To establish equity as the prime consideration for the allocation of government resources and the development of government policies and programs concerning young people.
3. To promote the recognition and development of the social rights of young people and to promote equal opportunity and affirmative action in government policies and programs concerning young people.

Social Justice Principles

In 1985 the Government identified a number of social justice principles. These principles include:

- equity — a range of support and development services should be available to all Victorians regardless of socio-economic circumstances, family structure, geographic location, ethnicity or disability.

- access — adequate and appropriate community services should be located as close as possible to where people need them, and information about them should be readily available.

- participation — everyone should have the opportunity to be involved in the planning, development and management of services which they use; and

- integration of services — various but inter-related needs of people can be met by one service or a cluster of services without them having to travel to different locations.

A significant component of the Government's commitment to Social Justice is the Anti-Poverty Strategy which states inter alia: "In the next four years, as the major thrust of State anti-poverty measures, we will continue and extend basic State programs to provide better housing, health, welfare and education, and ensure their distribution according to community need."

The Government is at present developing a Social Justice Strategy which will aim to provide a blueprint for the future social development of Victoria.

The Youth Guarantee

The Youth Guarantee is a broad strategy which aims to give 15 to 19 year olds the option of full-time work, education or training. There are four major objectives:

1. To increase the supply of permanent work available to young people.

2. To revise the level of participation of young people in full-time education.
3. To extend and develop new training opportunities including work-study and traineeship options.
4. To remove unfair barriers to youth employment.

Equity and Social Justice

The Final Report of the Child Welfare Practice and Legislative Review Committee, Equity and Social Justice for Children, Families and Communities has proposed the enactment into legislation of a Charter of Children's Rights which "broadly sets out the community's values and aspirations concerning its young people" — the right to a protective environment, the right to a family and family support, the right to education, the right to health and social services, the right to protection in employment, the rights of the disabled, the right to cultural identity, the right to participation, the right to information, the right to advocacy and counselling, the right to legal assistance and rights to review or appeal.

The youth principles emphasise the importance of "equitable distribution", "equal opportunities", "equity" and "affirmative action". The EAP is demonstrating how this rhetoric is applicable to young offenders and institutionalised youth.

The EAP is demonstrating how the social justice principles of equity, access, participation and integration are relevant

to young offenders and institutionalised youth. De-institutionalisation is basic to social justice for the target group. The Government is committed to reducing the numbers of children and young people in central institutions.

Affecting long-term improvements in the access of the target group to employment and training opportunities would critically complement de-institutionalisation.

The Program is developing the conditions for ensuring that the Youth Guarantee appropriately assists members of the target group aged between 15 and 19 years.

The Program is focussing on the right of the target group to employment, education and training.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article has been to briefly address four questions concerning the nature, intentions, achievements and significance of the Employment Access Program. The comments on the Program have been necessarily cursory and limited space has not permitted a more extensive and complex analysis.

For further information contact: Coordination Unit, Employment Access Program, Community Services Victoria, 6th Floor, 55 Swanston Street, Melbourne.

*David Griffiths
May 1986.*

The Workshop

Sally Minette

The Workshop Project is currently funded by the Department of Labour and is managed by the Gold St. Primary School Council, Clifton Hill.

The Workshop is an innovative project established with funding from the Department of Labour under the Employment Access Program.

We are a community based project designed to train four young women under care of Community Services in the design and construction of sets and props for the theatrical and entertainment industry.

When the Workshop was originally funded, the building which was to be our home was merely a derelict shell. Major construction work and services were professionally done but the fittings, preparation for and actual painting, office rostrum construction etc. were all done by the crew. The two original crew still here have seen enormous changes take place, changes in which they have played a major role.

The aims for the girls, apart from physical skill acquisition, include reliability,

persistence, ingenuity and flexibility, responsibility, quality, developing networks, safety, worker rights and responsibilities, development of a democratic workplace, and gaining an understanding of the industry and their potential place in it.

The skills acquired are: design and drafting, model making, carpentry, set finishing, colour mixing, costume design and construction, sculpture and latex work, signwriting, make-up, lighting, sound, stage management, puppet making, photography and graphics.

How These Skills are Acquired:

1. Construction of articles for the Workshop itself i.e. storage space, office rostrum, seating cubes, work benches. All items made are in consultation with the crew. This method has the advantage also of allowing the crew a sense of investment and ownership of the workplace.
2. Sessions are conducted in a variety of areas by professionals working within
- the industry, e.g. puppet making —with a member of Handspan Theatre; costume design and construction with Anja Bos, a theatrical and television costume maker, ramp design construction with Matthew Scott, a freelance carpenter and set maker, make-up with Anita Sinclair, ex-lecturer from Melbourne College of Advanced Education and founder of Livingroom Theatre.
- The skills learnt in the session often have direct relevance to other projects being undertaken e.g. learning puppet making in the morning and teaching it to the Gold Street Primary School art classes in the afternoon, or having a session on door jambs and slamming doors during work on a commissioned set which incorporates three doors.
- The sessions are valuable as (a) network for the crew, (b) maintaining relevance to the industry, (c) awareness within the industry of the Workshop (d) offering a variety of teaching styles and relationships.
3. commissions for construction of sets and/or props from various theatrical and community groups.